GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3410
ANSWERED ON:16.04.2008
OUTSOURCING OF ISSUANCE OF PASSPORTS
Adhalrao Patil Shri Shivaji;Verma Shri Ravi Prakash

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the outsourcing of the services pertaining to issuance of passports is likely to put national security at risk; and

(b) if so, the steps taken by the Government to ensure safety and security of the country?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS(SHRI E. AHAMED)

(a) & (b) In the Passport Seva Project, which has been elaborated in consultation with all concerned Government departments and agencies, only front-end and non-sensitive activities such as applications collection, data entry, acceptance of fee and capturing of photo etc., will be performed by the Service Provider selected through an open bidding process.

All sensitive aspects of passport issuance, including verification of documents, check-lists, the decision to grant a passport and the handling of blank passport booklets will remain with Government employees as hitherto.

The project will not compromise national security in any manner whatsoever. The new system will be introduced only after a comprehensive third party security audit by a Government agency. Such audit will thereafter be repeated every year. The data of passport holders will remain in the Government domain with strict access control. The ownership and strategic control of the core and critical assets of the project will remain with the Ministry of External Affairs. Data coming to the possession of the service provider, when the application is submitted, will only be used by him to feed the Government database and the service provider will be held strictly accountable for any misuse of data.